



## State of Connecticut

### HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STATE CAPITOL

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HOUSE REPUBLICAN CAUCUS CHAIR

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MEMBER  
APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE  
AGING COMMITTEE  
EDUCATION COMMITTEE

## Testimony

*In Support of H.B. No. 6737 & 6738*

**AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE  
PROGRAM REVIEW AND INVESTIGATIONS COMMITTEE  
CONCERNING TRANSITIONAL SERVICES FOR YOUTH AND YOUNG  
ADULTS WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER**

**&**

**AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE  
PROGRAM REVIEW AND INVESTIGATIONS COMMITTEE  
CONCERNING THE FEDERAL ACHIEVING A BETTER LIFE  
EXPERIENCE ACT**

*Program Review and Investigations Committee*

*February 27, 2015*

Dear Representative Carpino, Senator Fonfara, Senator Kissel, Representative Mushinski, and all other distinguished members of the Program Review and Investigations Committee: I would like to thank you for the opportunity to testify on House Bills 6738 & 6737 and to thank this committee for bringing this important legislation forward.

### **HB 6738**

Last year the federal government passed the "ABLE" Act. ABLE stands for Achieving a Better Life Experience. This law allows people with disabilities and their families to set up savings accounts for disability – related services and living expenses. Earnings on an ABLE account would not be taxed and account funds would generally not be considered for SSI program, Medicaid and other federal means – tested benefits. Current law makes saving for disability related expenses very difficult. Individuals face the loss of federal benefits if savings exceed

certain limits. Connecticut needs to join with other states in establishing this program and all account regulations. Some of the services covered under this program would include: education, housing, transportation, employment training and support. These accounts are very similar to college savings account programs.

#### **HB6737**

This legislation is in response to the December 2014 report **Transitional Services for Youth and Young Adults with ASD**. This bill provides for a Bill of Rights for individuals receiving special education services and guarantees these rights. The recommendations of this study make it clear that there is a need to strengthen transitional services during high school if not before. These transition plans would include educational, employment, independent living and support services. Addressing these needs earlier and consistently will ensure future success. This legislation also requires greater information gathering by the Dept. of Developmental Services to better identify the growing needs for ASD services. As stated in the reports staff findings "With proper supports individuals with ASD may live on their own, be employed and participate in the community."

Those of us who are members of the IDD caucus hear from parents at every meeting how critical the needs of their children are. They are no longer capable of doing it alone. It's apparent that today our state has no real viable plan to address this growing issue. The intention of both of these bills will start to address this growing problem earlier on in the process and hopefully will minimize the impact on individuals with ASD, their families and our state. This legislation takes a step forward for all of us in doing the right thing. .

Thank you.

Noreen Kokoruda

State Representative 101<sup>st</sup> District

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